

VZCZCXRO9506
RR RUEH DU RUEHJO
DE RUEHMR #0225 1301050
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 101050Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY MASERU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2037
INFO RUEHGO/AMEMBASSY RANGOON 0015
RUCNSAD/SADC COLLECTIVE
RUEHMR/AMEMBASSY MASERU 2309

UNCLAS MASERU 000225

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RANGOON FOR W. PATRICK MURPHY

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KOCI](#) [KHIV](#) [OEXC](#) [OVIP](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [PGOV](#) [SCUL](#) [PHUM](#) [LT](#)

SUBJECT: ATLANTA'S MAYOR AND LESOTHO'S YOUNGEST AIDS VICTIMS

1. SUMMARY

Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin visited Lesotho from 10 April - 13 April 2006 as a guest of CARE International. Ambassador June Carter Perry met with the Mayor on three separate occasions, an introductory meeting with the Ambassador in the Chancery, celebrations at a USAID and Center for Disease Control (CDC) funded orphans and vulnerable children's (OVC) project site and at a high level lunch. In attendance at the lunch were the Lesotho Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Local Government, Gender Youth Sports and Recreation, Natural Resources, Tourism Environment and Culture and the Mayor of Maseru. Mayor Franklin identified a number of challenges that Atlanta and Lesotho share, including water management, providing education, and HIV/AIDS. In discussions with the Ambassador, she also identified some potential assistance that citizens of Atlanta may be interested in supporting. END SUMMARY

2. Mayor Franklin highlighted Atlanta's importance as the home of CARE International and CDC and pointed out that Atlanta has one of the highest HIV positive populations in the U.S. She works closely with Morehouse and Emory Universities to develop Atlanta's ability to fight this epidemic. Atlanta's work in decentralization of medical services headed by Former Surgeon General Dr. David Satcher and presently Director of the National Center for Primary Care at the Morehouse School of Medicine may prove especially instructive. The Mayor and Ambassador agreed that Atlanta's experience could be used to help address Lesotho's own problems through training and outreach. Also, he Mayor is an alumna of Howard University, where the Ambassador was Diplomat in Residence (2002) and was open to helping Lesotho develop a relationship with this premier institution's hospital and medical departments.

3. During discussions with the Ministers of Finance and Foreign Affairs, the Mayor emphasized her involvement in Atlanta's need for better water management to meet the growing population (five million). Like Atlanta, Lesotho is developing its infrastructure to manage water. The Minister and Mayor agreed that information sharing on this vital issue would help both governments.

4. The Mayor also shared with the ministers Atlanta's success with accelerated condensed education initiatives. Atlanta is training young people to be skilled workers in the fields of medicine (pharmacists, chemists, health care providers), plumbing, electronics, firefighting, and police officers in shortened certificate courses. Atlanta's program has provided young unemployed residents access to jobs and skills. Many of these young people have been able to take their training and pursue further education. The Mayor said Atlanta's initiative presents a model, which could be transferred to Lesotho and help tackle Lesotho's high unemployment rate and lack of skilled workers. The Mayor said one of the greatest advantages from a

management point of view from these accelerated condensed courses was the ability to serve more people without increasing the budget -- in other words, stretching a limited education budget to serve more people.

¶5. The Ambassador and Mayor discussed Atlanta civil society's potential assistance to Lesotho's OVC. Civic organizations in Atlanta are already supporting orphanages in South Africa. It is hoped this support can be extended to the approximately 200,000 OVCs in Lesotho. The Links Incorporated (An organization of mostly African American women with approximately 270 chapters predominantly in the U.S. was founded to address concerns arising from the immediate post-World War II era. The corporate entity works to create, as per its name, links of assistance and friendship. There are over five The Links Inc. organizations in the Atlanta metro area.) were raised as a potential source of assistance. The Mayor suggested Atlanta's International Leadership Institute might also assist.

¶6. Comment: Due to flight routes, a large number of visitors from Lesotho to the United States pass through Atlanta. Volvis or Atlanta-hosted excursions for ECA-sponsored visitors and others would, at no significant extra cost, provide an opportunity to observe first hand Atlanta's initiatives to address problems similar to those in Lesotho. Furthermore, networking with Atlanta's government will reinforce USG MPP goals in Lesotho of decentralizing government, democratic practices, global health and economic development and growth. Preliminary discussions with the Mayor's staff suggest Atlanta would be interested in pursuing a closer relationship.

PERRY